

N. Y. Wed. Evng - 14/3

My dear Gray - It is fully time that your kind letter was answered - certainly the delay is not attributable to forgetfulness, for I have thought, continually, on the topics it embraces, without feeling able to make up my mind - At length, however, after the best considerations which I have been able to give the whole matter, I have come to the conclusion that I am not able to "cut fathead" though I have many yearnings after the pursuits & companionship to which you so very kindly invite me - If I could talk with you, I might be better able to lay before you the result of my musings, but, within the compass of a letter, I can only sketch them, after your own fashion, with a pithy sentiment, rep- tho' if the paper were larger, I should prefer giving you the workings of my mind, on the several phases presented by the question, after Robinson Crusoe's fashion - Pro & Con.

1. My landlord is going to California, & - "the world is all before me where to choose" but as every body moves in April & May, the when to choose is restricted to the absolute just now, & therefore, I must be on the look out, at once.
2. I have not "any business engagements, present or prospective" & am "living on my fat", but like the bear & the Camel or rather the latter, long abstinence & depletion have reduced my hump to a mere nothing, & I must soon "do or die". But @o what? Aye, there's the rub - Go to California? No, I thank ye - There are too many on that bay, already. True, as you say, I was never less fitted for the worry & cares of business, & my comfort will inevitably be destroyed if I assume them - Nevertheless, tho' I want now feel myself independent upon one tenth of the income I have formerly expended, as a Housekeeper, that little, however little, I must have - or starve - for run in debt I will not - that is "a fixed fact." Well then, the little I require, I desire to

have as a permanent certainty; whereas, what you propose, (even supposing that I could make a bare living by such, to me, pleasurable pursuits) are mere jobs, leading to no other or ulterior employment of the same kind - & by leaving this, the only community in the U. S. where I am known as a business man I turn my back upon the only chance - however poor a one - of procuring a living - At the end of one or two years ^{with you}, I should return with a disinclination for commercial pursuits ~~and~~ a little short of positive disgust, & with lessened prospect of any employment (if that might be) than exists at present - Or, if the worst comes to the worst, & I carry out my former project, as a dernier resort, I shall leave the country with less of pain, it may be, than if I were to tear myself suddenly away from pursuits in which I was deeply interested - But, supposing even ^{the worst} that ~~you~~ ^{some} ~~will~~ ^{come in} come in, from time to time, yet I candidly confess to you, my dear friend, that having never tried the experiment, I have no confidence that I could earn enough to keep soul & body together, & the latter in restraint - My botanical work is done in a slow pains-taking manner, & would not tell for much, I greatly fear - Now, if this were so, what I could not earn you would, in fact, give me, by overestimating my labours rather than let me need - an arrangement which I should view differently, perhaps, ~~and~~ were you A. Laurence or J. A. Lowell Esq., & as much my friend, as the less endowed Professor - who, tho' he has a comfortable provision, thank God, yet knows well enough what to do with every dollar of his income - Well then, to come to the "tittle of the whole" I resolve to get myself as cheap chambers as I can, wherein to bestow my goods - & myself - for another year, if life be spared, beyond which time it is not worth while to speculate - It remains only, before dismissing the subject, heartily to thank you, & your dear wife for the kindness which you have expressed, & more which you have intended towards me -

I sent you all my spare ferns by Brother Charles - I continued to make out about 3 doz. species in all, some (of my own) specimens were such as your friend is not likely to get elsewhere, I persuaded myself - Was not that a clever find? *Equisetum pratense* for the U. S.? It will make a feature in the 2^d edⁿ manual - I hope you will tell me what you think, when you have examined it.

Torrey asked me for a copy of my Pejiveeds - but Allin has not sent me a single one, nor have I seen it since I corrected the proof, as Sam. has not yet got the last number - May I beg you to send me an some copies, if you have them - I want to send one to Dr. Brownfield (thru' Pratt) & wish you to send one to Prof. David. thro' some of your B. F. friends. I also mean to send it to Engelmann, as he kindly sent me some pejiveeds - thro' you. I have already written to you how much I am pleased with the Pl. Handb. - It is a very valuable paper. But do, I pray you, answer my qy. as to the yellow asteroid (spreading) plant - look at my original notes to you about it - It cannot, must not be an Erigeron - we shall get into hopeless mazes with yellow Erigeron -

Torrey tells me that Wright missed his packet, & is detained - I have not seen him, as he has gone into the country

Thurs^{dy} Dec^r 10th I think of nothing to add to the above, except to call your attention to a request in my last, as to Elach. Baobab - which please bear in mind - Keep an eye on Brother Charles - His appearance rather worries me - He looks attenuated, & seemed to me to have a scared cough - When you have leisure - when is that? - write to me as your letters give me pleasure, hurried illegible tho' they most commonly are.

My health continues to be very feeble, my spirits at times are
deplorably dull - Indeed, I am woe-begone enough just now, so
that I may give you excuse, on that score, for whatever may seem
to need it, in this letter, with hearty love & good wishes to the
dear lady J. & kind regards to Papa & the family, I am
affly & truly Yrs.

Supr. A. Gray
Cambridge
Massachusetts.

I read some part of your last to our friend S. who seemed
rather annoyed that Sprague should be set to work on the "Free book"
or any thing else, until he had completed what he has engaged to
do for him (Exply Expt. & Freeman). I merely remarked that S.
must be kept going to pay off his indebtedness to you, to which S.
replied, that his money was as available for that purpose as
any other - This is strictly entre nous, I merely mentioned for
your private information & guidance - Indeed the whole of this letter
may be confined to ourselves - not excluding the dear wives however -